

Message Text

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1. DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER COMMENTS ON TOKYO CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING (UNCLASSIFID)
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GUB DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR PLANNING

AND FINANCE U LWIN HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE ON DECEMBER 10 TO EXPLAIN THE RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING IN TOKYO. U LWIN REVIEWED BURMA'S EFFORTS TO OBTAIN FOREIGN EXCHANGE NEEDS TO FULFILL THE GUB'S FIVE YEAR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM. HE SAID CONFERENCE DELEGATES AGREED ON THE SOUNDNESS OF BURMA'S FIVE YEAR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM AND ON BURMA'S NEED FOR INCREASED EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE AT CONCESSIONAL TERMS. THE MINISTER SKIPPED OVER ACTUAL RESULTS OF THE CONFERENCE, MERELY NOTING THAT SOME COUNTRIES EXPRESSED DESIRE TO ASSIST IN CERTAIN PROJECTS. HE WENT ON TO NOTE THAT BURMA ALSO INTENDS TO ACCEPT ASSISTANCE FROM COUNTRIES OUTSIDE THE GROUP. HE CITED NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PRC FOR RAW MATERIALS AND CONSUMER GOODS, WITH YUGOSLAVIA FOR ELECTRIC POWER DISTRIBUTION, WITH CZECHOSLOVAKIA FOR TIRE PRODUCTION, WITH DENMARK FOR FISHERIES EXPANSION AND WITH NORWAY FOR PROCUREMENT OF TRAWLERS AS EXAMPLES OF THIS POLICY.

COMMENT: (LOU) WITHOUT ACTUALLY SAYING SO, U LWIN GAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT BURMA WOULD ATTAIN ITS FOREIGN ASSISTANCE REQUESTS AS A RESULT OF THE CONFERENCE, AN IMPRESSION THAT MAY BE MISLEADING. TWO YEARS AGO THE GUB GAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT ALL ECONOMIC PROBLEMS WOULD BE SOLVED ONCE BURMA'S OFFSHORE OIL BEGAN TO POUR IN; U LWIN'S REMARKS COULD GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE PEOPLE NEED ONLY WAIT UNTIL FOREIGN ASSISTANCE BEGINS TO FLOW IN TO SOLVE THEIR ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES. U LWIN IGNORED ANY CRITICISMS OF BURMESE ECONOMIC POLICY OR SUGGESTIONS FOR POLICY CHANGES THAT WERE PRESENTED AT THE CONFERENCE. FOR EXAMPLE, ALTHOUGH NEARLY EVERY DELEGATION AT TOKYO URGED OR ASKED ABOUT PRIVATE FOREIGN INVESTMENT, U LWIN DID NOT MENTION THE TERM AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE.

2. PRICES OF EDIBLE OILS AND OTHER FOOD ITEMS DE-CONTROLLED (LOU)

ON DECEMBER 8 THE GUB MINISTRY OF TRADE EXEMPTED EDIBLE OILS, CHILLIES, ONIONS AND OTHER FOOD ITEMS FROM PRICE CONTROLS. THESE ITEMS WERE PLACED UNDER PRICE CONTROLS, WITH LEGAL DISTRIBUTION RESTRICTED TO COOPER-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ACTIVE STORES, IN JUNE 1975. AT THAT TIME THE GUB ANNOUNCED THE CONTROLS AS A MAJOR EFFORT TO BRING DOWN THE COST OF LIVING, BUT THE CONTROLLED ITEMS DISAPPEARED FROM LEGAL CHANNELS AND WERE AVAILABLE AT MUCH HIGHER PRICES ONLY ON THE BLACK MARKET. REMOVAL OF CONTROLS SEEMS A TACIT ADMISSION OF FAILURE FOR THE GUB'S PRICE CONTROL POLICY AND THE COOPERATIVES' DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM. HOWEVER, THE LOCAL PRESS HAS CARRIED ARTICLES BOASTING

OF HOW THIS NEW POLICY, I.E., DECONTROL OF PRICES, HAS RESULTED IN LOWER PRICES FOR COOKING OIL.

COMMENT: WHILE DECONTROL IS A USEFUL AND WELCOME STEP TOWARD MORE RATIONAL ECONOMICS, TO KEEP THE NEW POLICY IN PERSPECTIVE WE REPEAT BELOW THE COMMENT MADE IN WEEKA #22, JUNE 19, 1975, WHEN THE CONTROLS WERE ANNOUNCED:

"PERHAPS IT IS SAFE TO PREDICT THAT WITHIN A SHORT TIME THE GUB WILL ANNOUNCE A 'BOLD NEW POLICY TO BENEFIT THE PEOPLE' BY REMOVING ALL CONTROLS ON PRICE AND TRANSPORT OF THESE COMMODITIES, THUS RESTORING THE STATUS QUO AND EASING THE CRISIS ITS OWN REGULATIONS CREATED. SUCH IS THE WAY OF ECONOMIC PROGRESS IN BURMS."

3. AIR TRANSPORT AGREEMENT WITH GDR (UNCL)

GUB AND GDR OFFICIALS SIGNED AN AIR TRANSPORT AGREEMENT ON DECEMBER 9. THIS REPRESENTS A CONTINUATION OF THE GUB'S AIR TRANSPORT AGREEMENTS WITH A WIDE RANGE OF COJEPES. AS WITH MANY PAST AGREEMENTS, NEITHER SIDE HAS ANY IMMEDIATE PLANS TO UTILIZE RIGHTS OBTAINED UNDER THE AGREEMENT.

4. NARCOTICS CONTROL DISCUSSED IN SHAN STATE (UNCL)

DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE PEOPLE'S POLICE FORCE U SHWE THAN AND STAFF VISITED TAUNGGYI DECEMBER 9-11 FOR DISCUSSIONS ON CURRENT NARCOTICS CONTROL ACTIVITIES IN THE SHAN STATE. CROP SUBSTITUTION AND DRUG REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WERE REVIEWED WITH SENIOR OFFICERS OF THE EASTERN COMMAND, SHAN STATE PARTY REGIONAL COMMITTEE AND PEOPLE'S COUNCIL MEMBERS. DURING THE VISIT U SHWE THAN ALSO DISCUSSED NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION OPERATIONS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WITH THE COMMANDER OF THE 77TH DIVISION, THE DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE 88TH DIVISION AND WITH RESPONSIBLE OFFICIALS FROM THE REGIONS WHERE THESE OPERATIONS HAVE BEEN UNDERTAKEN.

5. FINAL ARGUMENTS TO BE HEARD IN COUP PLOT TRIAL (LOU)

AFTER HEARING THE TESTIMONY OF THE LAST DEFENSE WITNESSES, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COURT DIRECTED THAT FINAL ARGUMENTS BY DEFENSE COUNSEL BEGIN DECEMBER 15. THE DEFENSE LAWYERS, EVIDENTLY BELIEVING GUILTY VERDICTS HAVE IN REALITY ALREADY BEEN REACHED, HAD ORIGINALLY DECLINED TO MAKE THE TRADITIONAL FINAL ARGUMENTS.

6. RUSSIAN GYMNASTS, ANCERS VISIT (UNCL)

A KAZAKHSTAN SSR GYMNASTIC AND ACROBATIC TEAM OF

NINE MEMBERS ENDED A SERIES OF FOUR WELL-ATTENDED EXHIBITIONS AT RANGOON'S AUNG SAN INDOOR STADIUM DECEMBER 13. THE FINAL PERFORMANCE WAS HIGHLIGHTED BY THE PARTICIPATION OF BURMESE GYMNASTS ALTERNATING WITH THE RUSSIANS, MUCH TO THE DELIGHT OF THE AUDIENCE.

A 40-MEMBER SOVIET DANCE TROUPE IS DUE TO ARRIVE IN RANGOON DURING THE THIRD WEEK OF DECEMBER FOR A TWO-WEEK STAY.
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